

ABSTRACTS

Sustained Hospital-based Wellness Program

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Introduction: Beginning as a grassroots initiative, a community hospital employing 2800 celebrates the stress-transforming benefits of HeartMath for its employees and community. Initially introduced to address the deleterious effects of personal stress experienced by the high healthcare claimants of the organization, HeartMath was eventually introduced to every stratification of the organization's population health management. The ensuing depth and breadth of HeartMath's presence in the organization is a consequence of a deliberate effort to integrate the program at every possible and sensible touch point of the organization and, ultimately, patient care. Today, 5 years later, the success of HeartMath at Indiana University (IU) Health Bloomington continues to be a tribute to the grassroots movement of an established worksite wellness program.

Methods: HeartMath was initiated as an intervention for transforming the stress of a workforce's highest healthcare claimants: those with the complexities of co-morbidities as well as challenging psychosocial and economic realities. This segment of a workforce is invariably the greatest strain to any organization's health plan. As importantly, on an individual level and subsequent to their health status, the respective employees can experience tremendous personal strain in several dimensions of their lives. Further compounding their marginal and worsening physical health, the inherent challenges of the current medical system to integrate and advocate for their care requires that stress be addressed and skills developed for a positive, long-term, and sustainable outcome.

From this small but powerful vantage point, IU Health Bloomington's platinum worksite wellness program (a distinction of the Wellness Council of America) extended HeartMath to every population health management stratification within the organization. This specific program migration happened initially by way of departments and units that expressed, in an employee opinion survey, high levels of stress. In some instances, these highly-stressed departments were also departments with higher staff turnover, attributed most consistently to the acuity of patient care. The critical mass of acquired HeartMath mastery by more than one thousand employees allowed the organization to introduce HeartMath's neutral technique as a non-pharmacological option for patients experiencing pain, anxiety, or sleeplessness.

Wrapping "heart" around self-care (through the worksite wellness program), patient care (at the bedside, laboring mothers, hospice patients and families), and subsequently a culture of care, HeartMath is credited, in part, with the increase in the organization's aggregate "culture of care" index.

Discussion: Transforming stress from a worksite wellness program to a culture of care required a thoughtful internal audit of training and patient touch points that were sensible and appropriate to teach, reinforce, and practice HeartMath. From the mandated training for Giving and Receiving Feedback to patient registration, onboarding to inpatient Behavioral Health group and individual sessions, and Nurse Residency retention programs to the VA Clinic outreach, HeartMath is the stress-transformation technique for employees and patients with the ultimate goal of creating a healthier and more resilient community.

Results: HeartMath has become the stress-transforming practice for IU Health Bloomington. Because of the numerous touch points of integration and the delivery platform of an established employee wellness program, HeartMath is a dimension of employee experience without boundaries—boundaries that are otherwise and previously accepted: departmental, human resource development and performance, as well as clinician and patient. Statistically, from 2009 to 2012 the response to the question regarding employees' perception of the organization's interest in creating a healthy workplace increased overall by 6% in the categories of excellent, high interest, and good interest.

Conclusion: Contrary to the more common launching point of HeartMath by way of senior leader stewardship, the potential for grassroots introduction can lead to rich integration of existing programs, organizational practice, and policy making with an outcome of enhanced culture of care and employee satisfaction.